

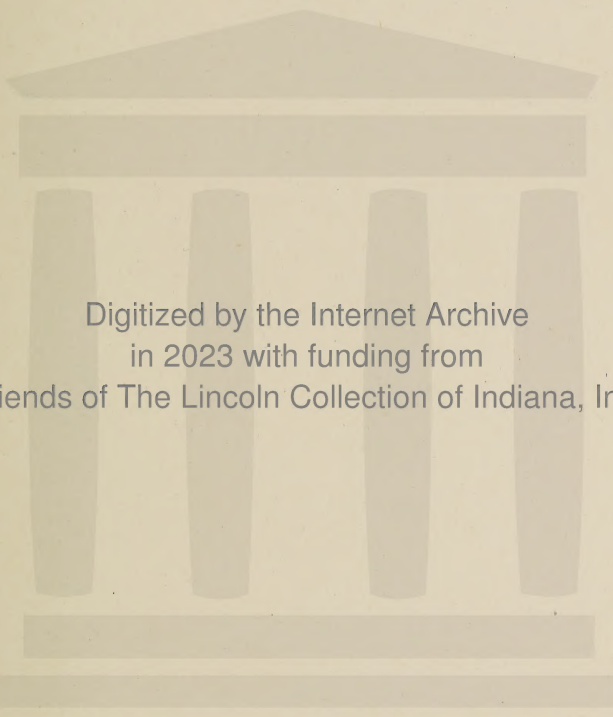
Abraham Lincoln



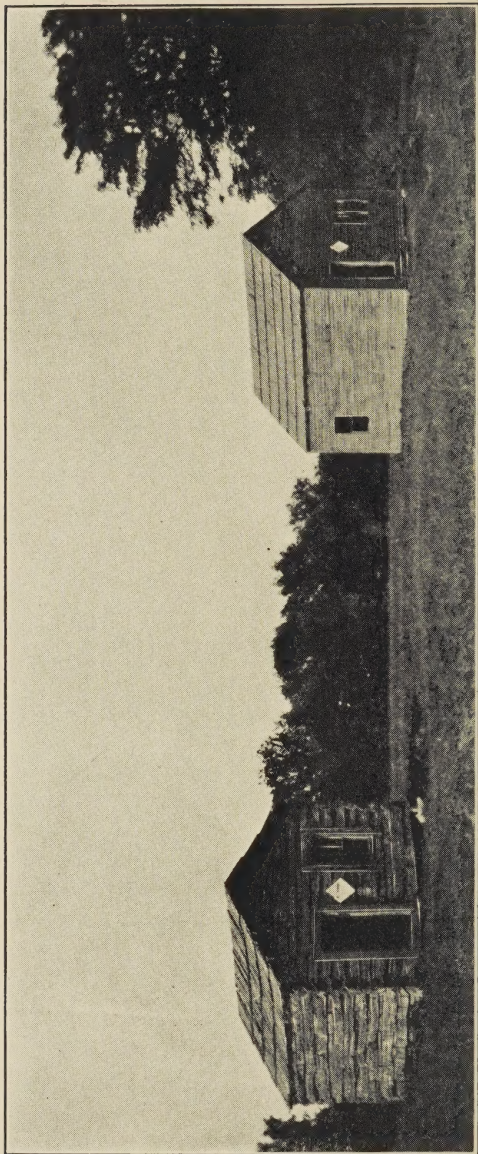
COVER ILLUSTRATION

A LINCOLN LOG COURT HOUSE

DECATUR, ILL.



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STORES

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ABRAHAM LINCOLN

An Address by

HARRY F. LAKE, ESQ.
(Rotarian)

Delivered before the

Concord Rotary Club, Concord, N. H.

February 10, 1925

Printed by pupils in the Printing Department and distributed
on the occasion of a visitation by Governor John G. Winant
and the New Hampshire Legislature to the Morrill
School of Mechanic Arts, Concord, N. H.

FOREWORD

The men and women who personally knew Abraham Lincoln are rapidly passing away,—indeed, the number is small today. For that reason, an association, though brief, with such a group, who, to the possession of intimate facts add perfect courtesy and great sympathy, is an experience never to be forgotten. Such an opportunity will soon be impossible. To visit the physical environment where Lincoln carved out his career, and to talk personally with men and women who had some real part in it, was an impressive exercise in citizenship.

The photographs shown, and many others, were taken by my daughter, Mary.

Harry F. Lake

Concord, N. H., February 20, 1925

- Address -

President Bill and Gentlemen of the Club:—

Having studied perhaps more than casually the life of Lincoln for some years past, I was not slow to grasp the opportunity which a visit to my cousins in Illinois this past summer afforded me to visit many places concerned in his career.

We should remember that aside from the time spent in the District of Columbia, the life of Lincoln was passed in three States. Born in Kentucky February 12, 1809, his father, in the tide of emigration which ever flowed towards the West past the door of his cabin, moved to Indiana when Abraham was seven years old. Two years thereafter, Nancy Hanks, weakened by her ministrations to her neighbors succumbed to malaria, and her remains are attended in death by the burial in the same enclosure of her aunts Polly and Nancy and their respective husbands. In less than two years Thomas Lincoln returned from Indiana to Kentucky, and married Sarah Bush Johnston, herself a widow, bringing her to his humble cabin home by Pigeon Creek, Indiana, where she began the pleasant though arduous task of being a second mother to little Sarah, eleven years old, and Abraham, only nine. Sarah married young, died January 20, 1828 and was buried near Lincoln City, Indiana. That Sarah Johnston Lincoln was a real mother to Abraham Lincoln, a real mother at a time when "every boy is a little mad," the world knows, knows most emphatically from the lips of Lincoln, himself! She died in 1869, in Charleston, Illinois, having proudly seen the full career of her illustrious stepson, to which she had contributed so much. Of

all American mothers, none stir the heart more than these two, who between them shared the birth, the training, the rich reward of his life, — and let it be said once for all that Thomas Lincoln was no slight man to have been the husband of two such thoroughly fine women.

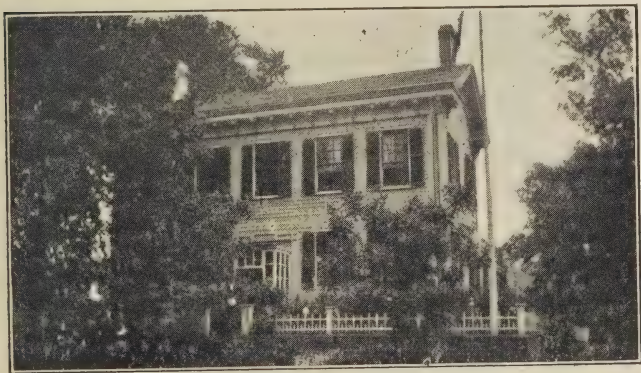
The Lincolns remained in Indiana fourteen years, and might permanently have stayed there had not the same sort of malaria broken forth again in 1830 which had taken off Nancy Hanks and her neighbors in 1818, Thomas Lincoln almost in a panic, gathered his family about him, loaded such of his goods as he could well take on a cart and set forth towards the north, and in 1830, in March, he passed through what is now Decatur, Illinois, to the site of his first home on the banks of the Sangamon River, some eight miles to the west. This home was built of logs by Abe and his father and other members of the exodus,—the site is still preserved by a large boulder on which is a copper plate stating the fact. I visited the place, and asked the woman now owning the poor farm on which the boulder is situated how far it was to the Sangamon River. Being informed it was but a quarter of a mile, my cousin and I went down. The Sangamon River is there the size of the Contoocook. There is the site of an old dam,—there is the site of an old school house, and for sentiment's sake, because I knew Abraham Lincoln had been there many times, I washed my hands in the river. As an exercise in cleanliness, my attempt was not a great success,—the silt-laden waters of Illinois are not the spring water rivers of New England! About four miles from the site of the river-side home of the Lincolns is the cabin, now part of a spacious home that has been built around it, in 1830 belonging to Major Willam Warnick, and to which Lincoln went with a case of frozen feet and was so faithfully cared for by the Major's three daughters for some

weeks that—so goes the story—he offered himself to one of them in marriage, but was refused because he was so homely.

In Decatur, in Fairview Park, is the Lincoln Log Cabin Court House, so-called—the first court house in Macon County, and where Lincoln resorted frequently during his practice. It is in a wonderful condition of preservation, used now by a patrol of Boy Scouts. Between some of the logs is the original mud that made it tight and weather-proof, and where this has fallen out cement has taken its place.

In Decatur, too, is the splendid museum of Lincoln and Lincoln-Rutledge relics and mementoes. Through the courtesy of the librarian, Mrs. Evans, I spent an afternoon in looking these over. One finds here a wonderful collection of photographs of Mr. Lincoln and the various members of his family, and a like collection of pictures of the Rutledge family to which Ann belonged. I was interested in the abstract of title of the first riverside home of the Lincolns in Illinois, and in the mahogany secretary—a fine bit of workmanship—constructed by Lincoln in his own home, reminding us of the fact that his father was a cabinet maker of considerable skill. Here I read the original of Lincoln's letter to a little girl, dated October 19, 1860, concerning her suggestion of his growing a set of whiskers. A splendid picture of Sarah Bush Johnston, Lincoln's stepmother, a photograph of the log cabin of the Lincolns on the Sangamon River, the poem of John Drinkwater, "Abraham Lincoln", composed by him in that room and written on a sheet of paper as he leaned over a showcase, the cradle in which the Lincoln children were rocked are a few only of the articles one may see there. Perhaps as much as in anything else, I was interested in the long linen duster which Mr. Lincoln wore during the memor-

able debate with Douglas in the fall of 1858. The collection is being rapidly increased and bids fair to be one of the most important of the various Lincoln collections. Above all other articles in interest there to be found, is the Kirkham Grammar, priceless memento, which, as a youth, he studied under the tutelage of Mentor Graham, the New Salem schoolmaster and which formed the foundations, on which later he built his mastery of English language. On the first inside page is written in Lincoln's hand these words,—“Ann Rutledge is now learning grammar.” This lovely girl, to whom I will again refer, was his boyhood sweetheart at New Salem. For more than a quarter of a century, Miss Ida Tarbell, famous Lincoln student, sought for this book,—within two years it has turned up in the possession of Ann Rutledge's nephew, and we hope has now been placed in the Decatur Library for all time. Just before I visited the library, Senator Beveridge of Indiana, was there, looking over the material for the purposes of his forthcoming life of Lincoln.



Residence of Lincoln, Springfield, Ill.

One can only hope it will be in value a companion piece to his incomparable “Life of John Marshall.”

Lincoln's home in Springfield, at Eighth and

Jackson Streets, still stands in excellent condition. To this home Mr. and Mrs. Lincoln removed from the Globe Tavern, where they first lived after marriage and until Robert, the eldest child, was born, paying incidentally the sum of four dollars a week for board and rooms. I went over this house—a two-story, eight-room house, containing but little Lincoln furniture, as Lincoln leased his house and sold his furniture to people by the name of Tilden when he went to Washington. The Tildens soon thereafter went to Chicago and the furniture was burned in the great fire of 1871. There are a few chairs, several pictures and small articles from the home of the Lincolns, one small dining room table and the dining chair of Mrs. Lincoln, in which we sat as we registered at the table. Most interesting here is a beautiful couch which graced the parlor of the Ninian Edwards home in Springfield, where Mr. Lincoln courted Mary Todd, who was the sister of Mrs. Edwards. This couch could undoubtedly tell most of the story of their courtship—said to have been stormy at times—possibly once or more times interrupted and broken, but happily consummated in their marriage, November 4, 1842, when he was a mature man of thirty-three, she an ardent Southern girl of twenty-four. This couch stood in the parlor of the Edwards' home on the wedding day, and ministered to the comfort of the guests.

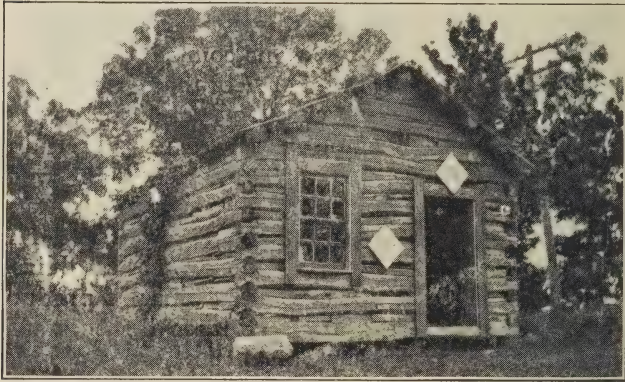
A word of the family into which Abraham Lincoln married. Mary Todd came of one of the first Kentucky families, a sister-in-law of Ninian Edwards, who was the son of the first governor of Illinois, and himself a man powerful in the political, social and financial world of Illinois.

Thereafter we went to the First Presbyterian Church, where Mr. Lincoln maintained a pew and where he attended with his family. As in silent meditation I sat there, I was glad I had about me the

evidences of that religious faith which, especially in his later years, so formed his mental attitudes and his character.

From Springfield, we went to New Salem, Illinois some twenty miles to the northwest. More than any small village I was ever in, this commanded my interest. Into it came in 1831 Abraham Lincoln, a penniless, friendless, obscure boy, and thence, six years later, beaten upon and wounded, perhaps scarred by some of life's hard experiences, he went forth, from the very first day of his going, to take his place among important men and events. His coming to New Salem was in itself dramatic. Hired out to Denton Offutt to take a flat-boat of produce to New Orleans, on his way thither his boat was stuck on the dam at New Salem, the front end protruded over the dam, the cargo became dislocated, water in the bow threatened to swamp the boat, and while many offered advice as to how the difficulty could be solved, young Abe Lincoln ran up into the village borrowed an auger, bored a hole in the part of the boat over the dam, let out the water, plugged up the hole, and so righted the boat, replaced the cargo and went on. In the museum at New Salem I saw the very auger with which he did the trick. Denton Offutt owned a store in this village on the bluff, one quarter mile from the Sangamon, and Lincoln came back from the New Orleans trip to work in this village store as clerk. In rapid succession, from clerk he became proprietor, Postmaster, surveyor, Captain in the Black Hawk War, and candidate for office, and at the age of twenty-five representative to the Illinois Legislature, to which three times immediately thereafter in succession he was elected. Here Mentor Graham first advised study in English grammar to one ambitious to get ahead, and under his teaching, Lincoln, with Ann Rutledge, conquered the intricacies of Samuel Kirkham's text-book. Here

he loved, wooed, won, and by death lost his boyhood sweetheart, the lovely Ann Rutledge, child of a family that ran its proud course from noble South



Denton Offutt Grocery Store

Carolinian ancestry. Here he began the study of law. One day an emigrant from Springfield to the West came by his store, driving a too heavily laden load through the mud. The driver in disgust offered to sell one heavy barrel and its contents to Lincoln for fifty cents. This was paid and the barrel rolled into the back of the store. One day, when business was more dull than usual, Lincoln poured the contents of the barrel on the floor, and there discovered a complete set of Blackstone. Time no longer hung heavily on his hands,—every minute was taken up by the precious volumes. One day a neighbor came by, saw Abe stretched out on the grass by the store front, looked at him a moment and said, "What doing, Abe?" Lincoln replied, "Studying." "Studying what?" pressed the inquirer—"Studying Law," answered Lincoln. "God Almighty!" ejaculated the neighbor, and walked off. And yet, in two years from that day, Abraham Lincoln was licensed to practice law, and went out of New Salem to be

the junior partner of Major John T. Stuart, one of the leaders, if not the leader, of the Illinois bar!

New Salem disappeared from the map about



Rutledge Inn and home of Ann Rutledge

1840, but within the past ten years the Illinois Historical Society has begun to restore the town and the buildings of Lincoln's time, and as you drive up the one street, east to west, you come to the Offutt store, the Rutledge Tavern, the Dr. John E. Allen residence, the Onstott wheelwright shop where Lincoln worked and studied at night, the residences of the friends and neighbors of Lincoln in his early days, then to the Lincoln-Berry store rebuilt and restored. I will admit a deep stirring of the emotions, as I ate my lunch on the lawn in front of it, to know that I was on the exact spot where Abraham had many times stretched out his length of shambling limbs, as he studied the commentaries of William Blackstone.

I have spoken of Ann Rutledge, his boyhood sweetheart. She died of malaria, in August of 1835, and is now buried in the beautiful cemetery at Petersburg, two miles away. For years her grave was marked only by a rough stone bearing her name

taken from the mill site at New Salem. Recently a granite shaft has been erected, and upon the copper plate attached to it is engraved Edgar Lee Masters' sonnet:

“Out of me unworthy and unknown
The vibrations of deathless music!
'With malice toward none, with charity for all.'
Out of me forgiveness of millions toward millions,
And the beneficent face of a nation
Shining with justice and truth.
I am Ann Rutledge who sleep beneath these weeds.
Beloved of ABRAHAM LINCOLN,
Wedded to him, not through union,
But through separation.
Bloom forever, O Republic,
From the dust of my bosom!”

Stand by her grave with reverent mind, for you know that here was one whose life and love helped to make a romance as beautiful as any of all “the short and simple annals of the poor.”

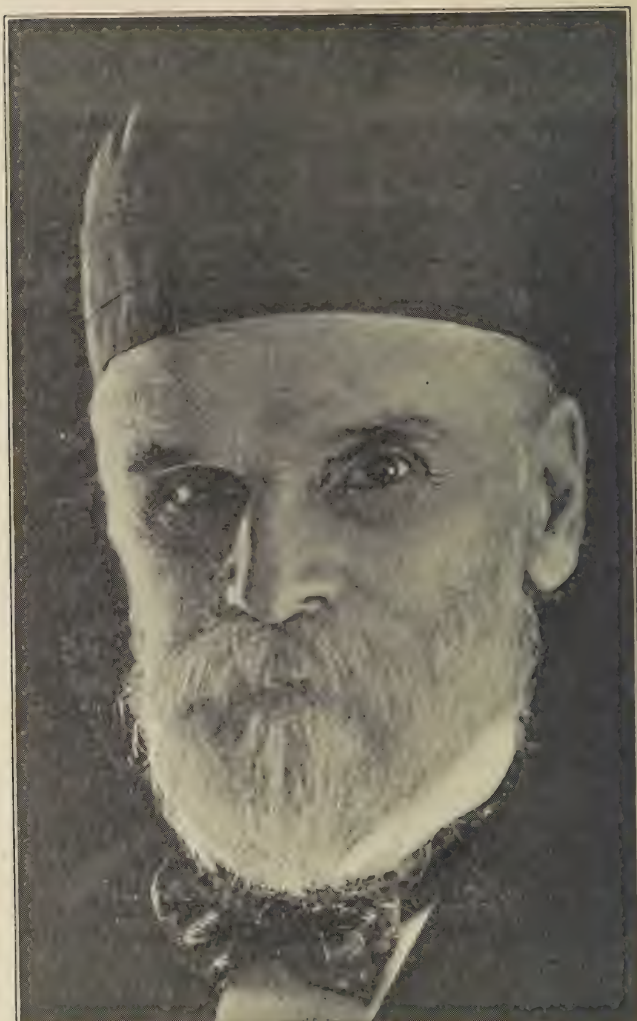
Let us say of Abraham Lincoln, as we said of his father, that he was a man of no slight stature to have commanded the love of two such lovely women as Ann Rutledge and Mary Todd, one the descendant of one of the first families of South Carolina and the other the proud daughter of Kentucky.

One would not of course miss the tomb of Lincoln in Springfield, becoming each year more and more the shrine of the American people. Four times the number of people visited it in 1923 as in 1920. The day I was there Mr. Henry Wells Fay, the caretaker, received a telegram from a fraternal order in St. Louis, asking permission for fifteen hundred members, making the trip for that purpose alone, to visit the tomb. Mr. Fay treated us with a

courtesy I can never forget. He told us that if we could wait until after five o'clock in the afternoon, he would take us—a privilege very seldom accorded visitors—down into the lower spaces of the tomb within the little iron gate to the room of the sarcophagus, itself. We stood in the position nearest possible to the body of Lincoln. I was impressed with the floral tributes about the room, from Lloyd George, Clemenceau, Paderewski, General Haller, Pershing, President Coolidge and the Rotary Club of Peoria. Those dear to Lincoln are there buried. I stood facing the sarcophagus, at my extreme left was the niche in the wall containing the body of Tad, who died in Chicago in 1871, aged eighteen, next the niche containing the body of Eddie, who died in infancy, and Willie, who died in the White House in 1862, next the resting place of Mary Todd Lincoln. The next two spaces are reserved for the bodies of Robert Lincoln and his wife, and the one at the extreme right contains the body of Abraham Lincoln, only child of Robert, and so the grandson of the President. When Robert Lincoln dies, that line of humanity which began in the dim eternity of the past comes to an end.

In one room at the base of the tomb is the largest collection of photographs in the world of all things relating to Lincoln, the work of Mr. Fay. What especially commanded my attention, however, was the presence of two chairs out of the law office of Lincoln and Herndon.

The one person intimately concerned with Lincoln whom more than any other I wished to see was Henry B. Rankin, of Springfield, the office boy in the Lincoln-Herndon office. Office boy no longer! Now a man eighty-seven years old, a retired banker, who day by day writes his personal recollections of Lincoln, attempting especially to set the world right concerning Mrs. Lincoln, whom historians have



Henry B. Rankin

treated rather lightly. Mr. Rankin's father was sheriff of Menard County, and as a boy his father often allowed him to leave school when Court was in session to run errands for Court attaches. He became acquainted with Lincoln as early as 1848, and then in 1856 went into his office, where for five years he sat across the table from Mr. Lincoln and did his work. Mr. Rankin gave me a large part of an afternoon, a most fascinating recital of Lincoln's part in important events as he neared the great work of his life, of his preparation for the Cooper Union speech, and the short speech to his neighbors the day he left Springfield for Washington, February 11, 1861,—a remarkable story of his speech heard by Mr. Rankin in Petersburg, in the campaign of 1856, to his old neighbors who, whether Democrats or Know-Nothings—and many in this audience would say there is no difference—determined that Lincoln should not speak in behalf of the Republican candidates whose cause he had espoused. As Lincoln began to speak, the explosion took place. He waited motionless for a little, and started again with the same result. For three quarters of an hour the will of Lincoln, determined to be heard, was locked in deadly contest with that of twelve hundred people determined that he should not speak. At the end of that period, the power of will and force of intellect of Lincoln prevailed, and for two hours he discussed with them the issues of the campaign. Politically, it was a poor day's work, as John C. Fremont at the subsequent election received only six votes in all Menard County, though four years later, when Lincoln was the candidate, the County went for him by nearly three hundred.

Much of my interview with Mr. Rankin was taken up by his recital of the character of Mrs. Lincoln. He says she was temperamental and ambitious, imperious at times, but that knowing Mr. and Mrs.

Lincoln as intimately as a young person would before whom they conducted themselves frankly, in the home, office, on the street, in public and at church he says that he knows nothing but loyalty, perfect understanding and love existed between the two and that Lincoln needed a woman of her temperament to spur him to his best and hold him to his course in those despondent moments that possessed him so often. I was deeply moved when Mr. Rankin, in bidding me good-bye, said,—“Please know, holding this old hand, that it has shaken the hand of Abraham Lincoln numberless times.” One thing more, Mr. Rankin says that as early as 1848, Mr. Lincoln was the best appearing lawyer coming into the Courts of Menard County. He told me his own mother, who, by the way, was Ann Rutledge’s tutor, saw Lincoln the day he went to Athens, seven miles from New Salem, to the home of John Vance to buy or borrow—we know not which—Kirkham’s Grammar, and she said he was most earnest in manner and altogether properly dressed. Mrs. Evans, the very courteous librarian at Decatur, remembers his early years and her acquaintance with Lincoln, and told me he possessed a dignity of manner and especially an air of chivalry toward women that made him always impressive. Away forever with the idea that Lincoln was the prairie buffoon some people—indeed, many—would have us believe!

Before I conclude, however, I want to take you back to the city square of Decatur. On a copper plate attached to a brick wall is this legend: “In this Square * * * the youth, Abraham Lincoln, passed in the spring of 1830 on his journey from Indiana into Macon County which was to be his first home in Illinois,”—he was then, as we remember, on his way to the home on the banks of the Sangamon, the log cabin yet to be built, in part by his own hands,—going his way unnoticed and unknown. A stone’s

throw from this point on the brick wall of the Milliken Bank Building is another copper plate, and this informs you,—“Abraham Lincoln’s name was first mentioned for President of the United States at the Illinois Republican Convention held in a wigwam erected here, May 10th, 1860.”

This convention, which began in a riot of enthusiasm in his behalf, ended in the pandemonium of men determined to force his nomination. Do you get the dramatic force of these two dates —only thirty years apart—from densest obscurity to highest fame. So marvellous are the accomplishments of a few years in the hands of one entirely great! Eight days after the later date, in another wigwam prepared for the purposes of the National Republican Convention, Abraham Lincoln was nominated to the Presidency in Chicago, and so began the later phase of his remarkable political career which led to Washington, Ford’s Theater, and illimitable glory!

Gentlemen, there are four men in the History of the United States, an intimate acquaintance with the lives of whom, much in detail, I would make a part of the training of every boy and girl educated under the American flag. First, is the story of a certain hot-headed, emotional Irishman, uncouth, but of matchless eloquence, who stirred the hearts of a young nation with his proclamation of a new philosophy of politics, that death was preferable to any thing less than liberty, Patrick Henry.

The second was likewise a Virginian, who, however, fashioned his life much after the manner of an English gentlemen, who was rich but for the sake of the American colonists greatly depleted his fortune, and who finally led the armies of the colonies to the most amazing victories against the combined power of the British Empire,—the first President of the United States. The third is John Marshall, the interpreter of the Federal Constitution, upon which

is founded the growth and prosperity of the American nation. And the fourth is the story of a certain railsplitter, born almost as lowly as the Son of Man, without fame or grace of fashion, and without the formal training of the schools. At the time in life when the scion of the rich today, too often bothered only as to the easiest means of obtaining it, receives from some college his diploma, which means from first to last a formal program of study of fifteen to sixteen years, Abraham Lincoln was building log cabins, splitting rails, operating river flat-boats or working as hired man on a neighbor's farm, and finally, voluntarily adding a little to the bondage of minority, performed directly after his twenty-first birthday his last filial task, the building of the log home on the Sangamon, the plowing of some acres, and the putting in of a crop. From the obscurity of such a school, however, this youth emerged to a position of supreme command in a critical hour, and on him rested the destiny of a nation,—Abraham Lincoln, child of the wilderness and the prairie, thereafter the sixteenth President of the United States, and now of deathless name and fame.

